

**Department of Commerce
Occupational Safety and Health Program
Report**



August 2005

**Department of Commerce
Office of Occupational Safety and Health
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Executive Summary

The monthly Occupational Safety and Health report provides leaders and managers with an overview of the effectiveness of the Department's Occupational Safety and Health program. The report is based on the latest available data for the Department derived from employee compensation claims and measures the Department's progress towards meeting the goals of the White House Safety, Health, and Return-to-Employment (SHARE) initiative.

This report begins the use of accident statistics based on accident reports submitted to bureau safety offices. This data has been gathered for Calendar Year 2004 and work is on-going to gather it for Calendar Year 2005. This data will be gathered by Calendar Year to meet the new accident reporting requirements outlined in 20 Code of Federal Regulation (CFR) Part 1904.

The cost of accidents as shown by Workers' Compensation Claims continues a downward trend and appears to be slowing in the upper \$14M range. In contrast, the cost for employee continuation of pay is increasing. This cost was down in Fiscal Year 2004 but is rising in Fiscal Year 2005 and is projected to exceed the Fiscal Year 2003 cost. The total cost of accidents for Fiscal Year 2005 is expected to be \$14.4M with \$430K of that total going to continuation of pay.

The Office of Occupational Safety and Health will conduct a thorough analysis of claims to determine the cause. In the meantime, raw data indicates two initiatives that may provide some improvement. First, there are instances where supervisors have put employees on continuation of pay without authorization or kept them on longer than authorized. The compensation contractor for the Department, Contract Claims Services, Incorporated (CCSI), should determine when and how much continuation of pay to provide employees. Second, light duty, return-to-work positions, are not being rarely used as a method of bringing employees back to work. Recovering employees may not be able to return to their regular job, but can often perform light duty assignments. Experience has shown that using these programs returns the employee to their original position faster and reduces the continuation of pay costs.

The department did not meet the SHARE goal to reduce lost production days for Fiscal Year 2004 and will not meet it in Fiscal Year 2005 without significant work. This goal includes the cost of continuation of pay, which has increased in Fiscal Year 2005.

Based on the information in the report the following recommendations are made to reduce the injuries, illnesses, and associated costs. The Office of Occupational Safety and Health will publicize these recommendations and work with bureau safety offices to implement them, where possible.

Supervisors should approve continuation of employee pay only when it is authorized. If authorization is denied, the supervisor should change the continuation of pay to sick or annual leave.

Increase the use of light duty return-to-work positions, where feasible, to get employees back into the work force.

Area Safety Representatives should identify uneven walking surfaces and recommend corrections to building managers.

August Report

Purpose. To provide managers and leaders within the Department of Commerce with information about the effectiveness of the Department's Occupational Safety and Health program. This report is based on the latest available accident data for the Department derived from employee compensation claims. Wellness information is also provided to assist employees in preparing for the summer season. The Office of Occupational Safety and Health will publicize the hazards and recommendations in this report using the Department's web page. They will also work with bureau safety offices to further analyze the data and implement recommendations as appropriate for each bureau.

Discussion.

Accident Reporting. The Office of Occupational Safety and Health is in the process of reviving the accident reporting system for the Department. The accident log for Calendar Year 2004 is partially complete and work is also being done for Calendar Year 2005. This log will be maintained by calendar year in accordance with the new changes to 29 CFR Part 1904 that changes federal agency reporting to coincide with the private sector reporting requirements. Calendar Year 2004 will be the base year for this data. The data is incomplete and trend analysis can not be done for this month's report.

Worker's Compensation Claims Analysis. Workers' Compensation Claim Data tell us that the Total Recordable Case Incidence Rate is down from previous years. The Total Recordable Case Incident Rate is 1.19 per 100 employees thus far for Fiscal Year 2005. This rate was 1.50 for Fiscal Year 2004 and 1.48 for Fiscal Year 2003.

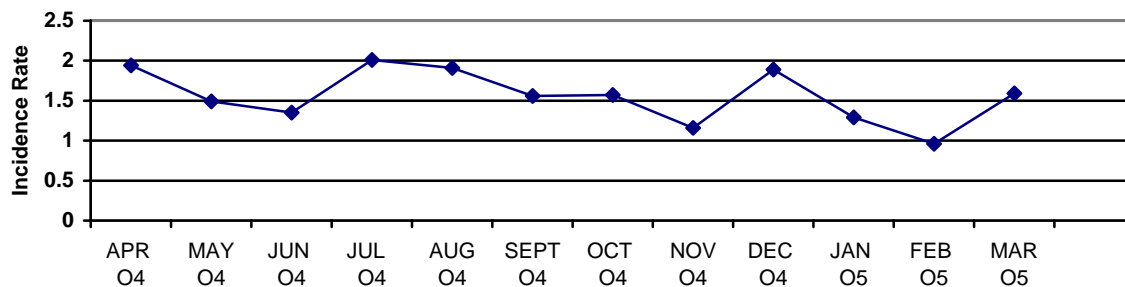


Figure 1. Total Workers' Compensation Case Incident Rate Trend

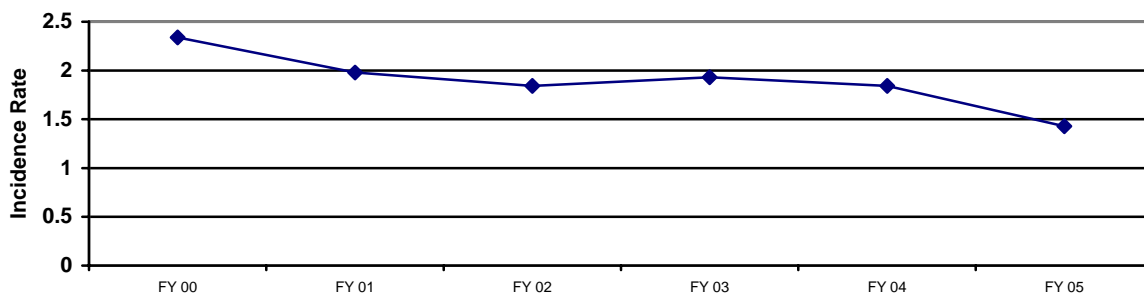


Figure 2. Monthly Total Workers' Compensation Case Incident Rate Trend

The charts in Figures 1 and 2 show virtually no change in the types of accidents that occurred in Fiscal Years 2004 and 2005. The three main accident types that account for most of the accidents unfortunately are considered by safety and loss control professionals to be the most difficult to control and eliminate.

The predominate cause for slips and falls is uneven walking surfaces. However, spills on floors caused several slips and falls. Corrective measures to prevent further occurrence include:

The frequency of Workers' Compensation Claims continues its downward trend as shown in Figure 1. The Total Case Incident Rate is 1.43 incidents per 100 employees for Fiscal Year 2005. This is below the previous five-year average of 1.89. The rates from October 2004 through March 2005, as shown in Figure 2, fluctuated between 1 and 2 claims per 100 workers.

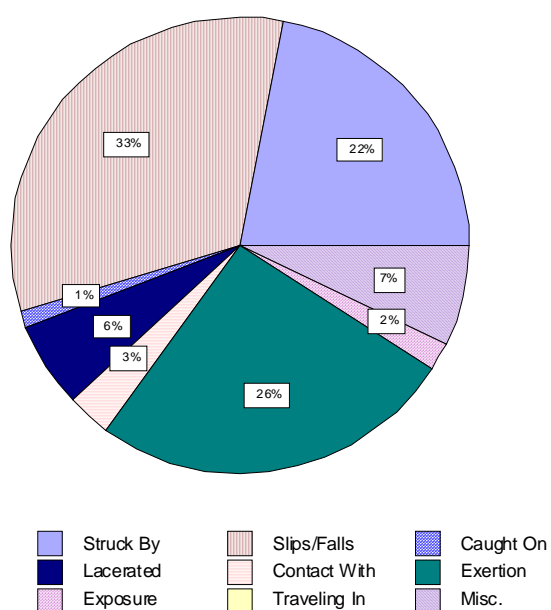


Figure 3. Workers' Compensation Claims by type for first three quarters of Fiscal Year 2005.

In Fiscal Year 2003 Workers' Compensation Claims cost \$14.9M, while in Fiscal Year 2004 those costs went down to \$14.7M. For the first two quarters of Fiscal Year 2005, the costs are \$7.2M and will likely be at \$14.4M by years end.

The cost for continuation of pay (COP) for employees under the Workers' Compensation Program has increased. In Fiscal Year 2003 the cost was \$319K and went down to \$271K for Fiscal Year 2004. This cost is currently \$115K for the first quarter of Fiscal Year 2005 and will likely be \$430K by year's end.

Forty percent of the "struck by" injuries reported so far in Fiscal Year 2005 involved a motor vehicle accident. This indicates a need for employees to drive defensively, anticipate the other driver's errors, and to better judge the risks posed by motor vehicles as they cross streets or intermingle with vehicles as a pedestrian. The Office of Occupational Safety and Health will publicize this information using the Department web page and in concert with bureau safety offices.

Workers Compensation Claims Management Initiatives.

The Office of Occupational Safety and Health has analyzed the claims within the Office of the Secretary. As a result action is being taken for three of the claims to clarify the current status the employee and potentially return them to work. In addition, a cost break down was done to show what each office within the Office of the Secretary spends for claims based on the employees injured.

A spread sheet is being developed to list all claims; past, present, and future for the Department. This spreadsheet will include a cost breakdown to the line office level for each employee. Bureaus can use this information to charge back their organizations for the cost of claims. Additionally, this spreadsheet will be compared to the Social Security Administrations Death Roster to identify employees on periodic rolls that may have died.

The Office of Occupational Safety and Health is working with the Safety, Human Resources, and Budget Offices of the National Atmospheric and Oceanic Administration to identify line office claims cost, verify no employees on periodic rolls has died, identify any claims that have employees that were or are not employees of the bureau, and to provide budget cost data.

The Office of Occupational Safety and Health is currently providing cost data to some bureau budget offices. An offer will be made to all bureau budget offices to provide them with claims cost information so that the costs can be budgeted for future years.

Bureau Assessments

In FY 2004 the Office of Occupational Safety and Health performed 4 oversight assessment. The purpose of the assessment is to ensure the effectiveness of the safety and health programs and determine if the bureaus are in compliance with applicable federal requirements. The methods used for assessing the program are:

- Checking documentation of activity:
- Interviewing site point of contact for knowledge, awareness and perceptions.

The process included identifying problems in areas of;

- Hazard Anticipation and Detection
- Hazard Prevention and Control
- Planning and Evaluation
- Administration and Supervision
- OSH Training
- Management and Leadership
- Employee Participation

For FY 04 program area, the areas for improvement required items are:

- Written policy need to be put in place.
- Developing and implementing a comprehensive baseline hazard survey for hazard anticipation and detection.

- Implementing formal safety and health training in top management objectives.
- Encouraging employees participation in developing goals in safety and health.

The Office of Safety and Health will continue to conduct baseline surveys and implement safety and health goals and initiatives throughout the Department. Assessments will be measured for effectiveness.

Department of Labor Initiative. On January 9, 2004, President Bush announced the Safety, Health and Return-to-Employment (SHARE) Initiative directing federal agencies to establish goals and track performance in four major areas. Federal agencies were charged with lowering workplace injury and illness case rates, lowering lost-time injury and illness case rates, improving timely reporting of injuries and illnesses, and reducing lost days resulting from work injuries and illnesses.

The department met three of the four SHARE goals for Fiscal Year 2004 and will only meet three of the goals for Fiscal Year 2005, without significant work. For Fiscal Year 2004 the Department exceeded the target of 20.7 for lost production days with an actual performance of 22. Data is still not available the third quarter of Fiscal Year 05 from the Department of Labor. However, the Department forecast indicates it will exceed the Fiscal Year 2005 target for lost production days.

Areas requiring emphasis include supervisors putting employees on continuation of pay without authorization, supervisors keeping employees on continuation of pay longer than authorized, and limited use of early return-to-work programs for occupationally injured or ill employees. A review of the claims does not indicate that employees are being injured more severely or are experiencing more severe illnesses than in previous years.

The Department will need to sustain performance in those areas where the target was met and take opportunities to reduce the number of lost production days by:

- Identifying employees from Fiscal Years 2004 and 2005 who were given continuation of pay without authorization and change the status for days to annual or sick leave.
- Verifying that supervisors of employees with denied continuation of pay change time to sick or annual leave.
- Increasing the use of light duty return-to-work positions, where feasible, until the recovering employee can return to their original position.

Health and Wellness. This month's topics for health and wellness are rape prevention and smoking cessation.

Rape Prevention.

Rape is a violent crime that people commit for power, control, and domination. Unfortunately, everyone is vulnerable. Rapists can be young, old, rich, poor, good-looking, male, female, smart

or stupid. Nationally, 82 percent of rape victims know the person who raped them. Most rapes happen in the home of the victim, the rapist, or a friend. Being raped does not fundamentally change the character, the values, the strengths, or the positive attributes of the victim. It is a bad thing that happens to them, not because of them. The victim is NEVER EVER at fault for being raped or attacked, but there are ways to reduce the risk of being a victim.

Prevention. Here are some recommendations based on some common mistakes that could result in a kidnapping, attack, and/or a rape:

- Don't get into an attacker's car even if they pull a gun and order you into the vehicle. It is better to run screaming. It is much more likely than not that the attacker will move on to an easier target.
- Don't pull over if another driver pulls alongside you pointing at your car indicating something is wrong. If this happens, drive to the nearest well-lit and populated gas station and look the car over yourself (or ask an attendant).
- Lock your doors while driving. It is easy for an attacker to simply walk up to a car while at a traffic light and jump in with a gun or knife drawn.
- Don't open the front door of your home until you positively identify who is there. If you don't have a peep hole, get one.
- Be alert in parking lots. If you go to the grocery store at night, don't be shy about asking for an escort to your car. Look in your back seat before entering your car. Be aware of your surroundings by looking to the left and right and behind you with your head up all the time.
- Do not trust clean cut, honest looking strangers. Attackers often look like they could be your friendly grocer, bank teller, waiter, neighbor, clergy, or doctor. They are every age and only a few actually look scary.

Reporting a Rape.

- Call the police in the jurisdiction in which the assault occurred, and file a police report. The police will escort you to the nearest hospital or appropriate facility with a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner.
- After the victim is seen at a local hospital, someone from the Rape Crisis Center will be there, providing information, support and referral sources.
- To talk with someone immediately call the operator and ask for the closest 24-hour rape hotline.

Smoking. Anything that increases a person's chance of developing a disease is called a risk factor; anything that decreases a person's chance of developing a disease is called a protective factor. Some of the risk factors for cancer can be avoided, but many cannot. For example, although you can choose to quit smoking, you cannot choose which genes you have inherited from your parents. Both smoking and inheriting specific genes could be considered risk factors for certain kinds of cancer, but only smoking can be avoided. Prevention means avoiding the risk factors and increasing the protective factors that can be controlled so that the chance of developing cancer decreases. In addition to the upcoming seminar the Department is planning, we are providing some tips below to help you quit:

Getting Ready to Quit.

- Set a date for quitting. If possible, have a friend quit smoking with you.
- Notice when and why you smoke. Try to find the things in your daily life that you often do while smoking.
- Change your smoking routines: keep your cigarettes in a different place; smoke with your other hand; don't do anything else when smoking; and think about how you feel when you smoke.
- Smoke only in certain places, such as outdoors.
- When you want a cigarette, wait a few minutes. Try to think of something to do instead of smoking.
- Buy one pack of cigarettes at a time. Switch to a brand of cigarettes you don't like.

On the Day You Quit.

- Get rid of all your cigarettes and put away all ashtrays.
- Change your morning routine. When you eat breakfast, don't sit in the same place at the kitchen table..
- When you get the urge to smoke, do something else instead. Carry other things to put in your mouth, such as gum, hard candy, or a toothpick.
- Reward yourself at the end of the day for not smoking. See a movie or go out and enjoy your favorite meal.

Stay Quit.

- Don't worry if you are sleepier or more short-tempered than usual; these feelings will pass.
- Try to exercise, take walks or ride a bike.
- Consider the positive things about quitting. A positive attitude will help you through the tough times.
- When you feel tense, try to keep busy, think about ways to solve the problem, tell yourself that smoking won't make it any better, and go do something else.
- Eat regular meals. Feeling hungry is sometimes mistaken for the desire to smoke.
- Start a money jar with the money you save by not buying cigarettes.
- Let others know that you have quit smoking, most people will support you.

- If you slip and smoke, don't be discouraged. Many former smokers tried to stop several times before they finally succeeded.

Future health and wellness topics will include:

September 2005 – Health affects of Hypothermia and preventing colds and flu

October 2005 – Winter Cold and Flu Season

November 2005 – Dress to Stay Warm

December 2005 – Preventing alcohol abuse and drinking and driving.